

WALK 6 4.25 miles/7 km

Beer to Colyton via Seaton Down, Holyford Woods & Four Cross Elms

(This strenuous walk can be combined with Walk 5 to make a circular 9.25 mile/15 km walk from Colyton. There is an hourly bus service from Colyton to Beer (except Sundays and public holidays). Check the timetable!)

Timing: Allow up to 3 hours to complete the walk at a relaxed pace.

Terrain: Paths and quiet lanes with several hills.

Number of stiles: 3.

Refreshments: pubs, tea rooms, and restaurants in Colyton and Beer.

Toilets: on the promenade in Beer, and in Colyton car park opposite the Colcombe Castle pub.

Always follow the Country Code <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code/the-countryside-code>. The most important advice is

- keep to public rights of way
- leave gates as you find them (either closed or open)
- keep your dog under effective control

Abbreviations used in the text:

FB: Footbridge.

KG: Kissing gate (a narrow gate hung in a stock-proof U or V-shaped enclosure).

PG: Pedestrian gate (narrow gate designed for walkers).

SP: Signpost.

WM: Waymark (a Devon County Council sign with a yellow arrow on a green background bearing the legend 'PUBLIC FOOTPATH', or a blue arrow on a white background indicating a 'PUBLIC BRIDLEWAY').

Route description

1 From the promenade at the bottom of Fore Street, Beer's picturesque High Street, **turn left** up some steps just beyond the public toilets. **15 metres** later, at the top of a few steps, **turn left** and walk **diagonally uphill** along a tarmac path.

2 At the top of the hill, the path **turns left** along an unsurfaced access lane to some houses, and then meets a main road. **Turn left** and walk **downhill** ignoring the steep narrow lane on your left.

3 After **90 metres** (1.5 mins) **turn right** along a path (**SP**) that runs steeply **uphill** to join the access road to a large house. **Bear right (WM)** along the access road to join a road (**SP**).

4 **Turn left** along the road for **75 metres** (1 min) and then **turn right** through a **PG (SP)**. Walk to the end of the field to a **gate (WM)** that gives access to a track.

5 At the far end of the track cross a **stile (SP)** and go **downhill** along a path that runs roughly parallel to, but some distance from, a hedge on your **left** for **120 metres** (2 mins) to reach a **WM** on a post. **Continue in the same direction** for another **100 metres** (2 mins) aiming for another **WM** on a post near a bramble thicket.

6 Turn left along a path bordered with brambles for **40 metres** to reach a **stile (WM)**. Cross the **stile**, then **turn right** and walk **downhill** for **85 metres** (1.25 mins) to a hedge. (There is a stile but it is sometimes obstructed so walk through a gap in the hedge to the left of the stile.)

7 Continue diagonally right downhill for **250 metres** (4 mins), skirting **on your left**, an isolated clump of trees, aiming for a **gate (WM)** that can be seen in a fence. (**Note** that the **WM** on the gate is slightly misleading because it aims directly to the brow of a slight rise. Instead, **continue ahead** for **35 metres** to reach a **WM** post where you should **turn right** and follow a wide grassy path towards the brow of a low hill to reach the dilapidated buildings of Couchill Farm.

8 Bear left at the farm (**SP** adjacent to the wall), keeping the buildings on your **right**, and follow a broad track for **380 metres** (6 mins) to reach a **gate and KG (WM)**. Walk along the field-edge towards a farm following the hedge on your **left**.

9 At the top of the field you will reach a junction of paths. **Turn right (WM)** and walk **uphill** in a gully with a bank on your **left** and a hedge on your **right**.

10 This will bring you to the access track that leads to Gatcombe Farm, where you should **bear right (WM** on post) and walk uphill for **200 metres** (3.5 mins) to a junction of paths. Note that sometimes there are low-voltage electric fences across the line of the paths in this field but they have insulated hooks so that walkers can temporarily detach them and pass through. **Be sure to replace the hooks.**

11 Ignore the gate immediately ahead, instead **turn left** and walk **uphill** for **25 metres** keeping parallel to a hedge on your **right**.

12 On reaching a broad track, **turn right** and immediately pass through a **gate (WM)**.

13 Follow the track for **200 metres** (3.5 mins) until reaching a **WM** on a post. Here **turn right**, pass through a **KG** and immediately **turn left** and follow a track running between hedges to reach a main road.

14 Turn left at the road and walk along the broad grassy bank, past a picnic site and on to a narrow footway to the A 3052. **Cross** this busy road and go through a **KG (SP)** opposite and walk downhill keeping close to the hedge on your **right**.

15 After **380 metres** (6 mins), near the bottom of the hill, pass through a **KG (WM)** that gives access to Holyford Woods Nature Reserve, and follow a waymarked track downhill for **360 metres** (6 mins) **ignoring** a track that bears off to the left.

16 At a junction of three tracks at the bottom of the valley, **turn right** to cross a **bridge (WM)**, and then **turn right** at another junction of tracks (**WM** on post).

17 After **450 metres** (8 mins), pass through a **KG (WM)** and follow the clear path **downhill** to a **gate (WM)** that gives access to a track that will take you to a lane.

18 Turn left along the lane which should be followed for **760 metres** (12 mins) through a series of 90° bends until arriving at a T-junction with another lane.

19 Turn right and follow this lane for **200 metres** (3 mins) and then **turn left** along a **BW (SP)** for **480 metres** (8 mins) passing Colyton Grammar School on your right.

20 10 metres before reaching a lane, **turn right (SP)** through a **PG** along a path that runs between fences, with a bungalow on the left, to reach a **KG (WM)** with duckboards over a boggy patch.

21 Continue ahead walking parallel to the hedge on your **right** to reach a **KG (WM)** giving access to an enclosed track that will take you to a **KG (WM)**.

22 Pass through the **KG** and follow the clear path to another **KG (WM)** with some stables ahead. **Continue ahead** keeping the stables on your **left** to reach a lane (**SP**).

23 Turn left along the lane for **60 metres** to the crossroads known as Four Cross Elms. **Continue ahead (SP 'Colyton')**. After 270 metres (5 mins) you will pass a charming picnic site on your **right**. It's worth entering via the **PG** to enjoy the extensive panorama of the Axe Valley, and the viewpoint plaque that points out the main features of interest.

24 Return to the road via the main entrance and continue to walk for 450 metres (7 mins) downhill into Colyton. **Turn left** at the T-junction at the bottom of the hill and immediately **turn right** into the Market Place.